

Erie County Fire Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

February 23, 2006

Call to Order & Opening Prayer: The meeting was called to order by Chairman G Whittington who also led with an opening prayer.

Roll Call:

Chairman Gerald Wittington	Present	Co-Chairman Douglas Larkin	Present
Sec./Treasurer John Wicka	Present	Dennis Allen	Present
Bruce Atkins	Present	Charles Bethge	Excused
William Boldt	Present	Daniel Carrier	Absent
Todd Catalano	Present	Donald Connolly	Excused
James Fyock	Present	Michael Gates	Resigned
Dennis Gibbs	Absent	Christopher Higgins	Absent
Daniel Kamman	Present	James Lawida	Present
Richard Litfin	Excused	Michael Lombardo	Present
Richard Mariani	Present	Steve Matisz	Present
Robert Mueller	Present	James Pluta	Present
Edward Saternus	Present	Charles Stewart	Absent
William G. Szewc	Present		

Also in attendance were Commissioner K Comerford, Deputy Commissioner J McCullough and M Walters from Kimball & Associates.

Prior to the start of the meeting, Commissioner Comerford and M Walters gave presentations. Commissioner Comerford on the status of the proposed merger of Emergency Services with Central Police Services and the Statewide Wireless Network (SWN) project. Mike gave a presentation on the status of the alerting project. The presentations were followed by a period of questions and answers.

Reading of Minutes of Previous Meeting: A motion was made by W G Szewc, seconded by T Catalano, to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was duly voted on and carried.

The Chairman introduced the newest member of the Fire Advisory Board, Commissioner Michael Lombardo from the City of Buffalo. The commissioner indicated his willingness and happiness to serve on the board and indicated that in his absence, his deputy, Garney Smith, will act as his alternate. The commissioner then asked to be excused in order to attend the wake of fallen firefighter, Donald Herbert. He was respectfully excused.

Reading of Correspondence: The correspondence was read and those items needing further attention were held for either old or new business.

Officer Reports:

Chairman's Report: G Whittington reported on the following:

- Attended two meetings regarding the SWN project and the alerting project. He encourages everyone to attend the scheduled presentations on the projects and to provide information back to their respective organizations. He also advised that everyone should take the opportunity to see the M/A Com bus presentation, when available, as this is a good venue to see what 800 MHz and interoperability will do and how it will operate. He also advised to read all the information that was distributed.
- He attended a meeting of the Charter Review Committee and received a draft of the proposed changes to the Department of Public Safety. The review committee is leaning towards planning for mandated funding for the proposed department and also to take the power away from the county executive of appointing the advisory board and place it with the legislature. It is hoped that the politics of selection will be limited through this process. It is expected that the charter revisions may be on a mandatory referendum this November.
- He thanked several of the FAB members who assisted him in getting the contact information for the communications survey being conducted by the county.
- He spoke with OFPC Chief T Wutz today to discuss the October 10, 2005 incident. Chief Wutz advised the incident was fully investigated and the findings were that the two SFIs who were involved in the incident did not act in a professional and responsible manner when dealing with this incident. It was reported that the instructors were not aware of any reported injuries until the following day. There should be no excuse for the damage caused to the burn building but there may have been some damage to the building prior to the incident. The instructors will be monitored in the future when they conduct courses. If

they fail to improve their performance, they could be removed as SFIs. He will be forwarding copies of the reports for the Deputy Commissioner and FAB files. Also discussed were matters involving the scheduling and follow-up paperwork required for state course training. Both agreed that things need to be done better. A lack of communications may have caused some problems. He is willing to attend a future FAB meeting to have an open and positive discussion to talk about issues or questions.

- The Chairman also stated he would like to meet with several committees prior to the next full meeting of the FAB. It was determined that this work session would be held Thursday March 23, 2006 at 7:00 at the fire academy. The secretary will send out reminder notices.

Co-Chairman's Report: D Larkin reported on the following:

- Received a call after the last meeting from Chet Riker with regard to scheduling a presentation for the SWN and alerting. He questioned why it was done with little advance notice. He also had questions about what the purpose of the survey was. G Whittington explained the basis of the presentations and survey and the results of the two meetings attended by himself, B Boldt and J Wicka. He asked the secretary to distribute the outreach presentation schedule with a copy of the minutes.
- It was suggested that due to the numerous issues we need to discuss at the monthly FAB meetings, we consider moving the starting time to 7:00 pm. After a brief discussion, D Larkin made the motion to change the starting time to 7:00. WG Swecz seconded the motion, which was duly voted on and carried.

Secretary's Report: J Wicka reported on the following:

- Attended the meetings as detailed by the Chairman
- Finished copying the previous FAB meeting minutes (back to 1990) into .PDF format and they are now on a CD. He will provide a copy to the Deputy Commissioner and anyone else who would like a copy.

Commissioner's & Committee Reports

Deputy Commissioner's Report: Deputy Commissioner McCullough presented his report, which is attached. He also reported on the following:

- T Schmittendorf briefed OFPC on 2/15 regarding the status of backlog of records and the application process. It is requested that all applications and course cards be completed clearly, along with Social security numbers. Accurate information is essential for proper record keeping.
- They received 165 applications for the Firefighter 1 courses.
- A new training schedule, effective 2/22/06, is posted.
- The 2005 budget crisis created the situation he and Tiger are experiencing with the backlog in the office. They are working hard to clear the backlog. They are working to prioritize their duties with the training schedule being the main priority followed by clearing the backlog of paperwork. It is not uncommon for both of them to get interrupted or have situations arisen that takes them away from their priorities. They would like additional clerical help and expect if will be a part-time person recently hired to assist EMS. They are trying their best to deal with all the duties and responsibilities they have. They asked for patience from all.
- Based on the request made at the last meeting, he will ask that the engineer look at all facilities and not just the live burn building.

G Whittington advised that he will work with Jim and Tiger to try and implement the on-line course registration program. This will steam-line the process and hopefully, clears up a lot of the cause of the backlog of paperwork. OFPC stated they are still willing to take over the registration process of state courses, if that is our desire.

School Committee: No report

Drill Towers Committee: WG Swecz reported on the following:

- Amherst tower:
 - Bricks are falling out of the walls
 - Storage building has bricks falling and wall pointing is needed
 - Electrical problems – wires are exposed in the electric boxes
- Chestnut Ridge:
 - There are holes in the walls
 - Windows need repairs
 - Door latches need attention
 - Roof simulator was damaged
 - Overhead door to storage building needs attention
 - Pooling of water in front of the building needs to be addressed

G Whittington again stated that problems and condition must be reported by the instructors. We cannot let these items go for prolonged periods. Some "food for thought" would be that instructors not be paid until such time all paperwork, including tower condition reports, are completed and turned in.

Radio Committee: D Larkin reported on the following:

- He will schedule a meeting with Saia to discuss the Colden/Angola issue of radio over-ride.

Deputy Commissioner McCullough advised his office sent out requests to several PSAPs requesting their frequencies be installed in the new mobile command bus and also in the county's command vehicles.

Legislation & Fire Prevention: The Chairman reported he is looking to hold the April FAB meeting at the new Public Safety Campus. More will announced when it is determined the building is ready for a tour.

Budget & Wall of Fame: Deputy Commissioner McCullough reported that the 2006 budget contains \$33,000 along with a carry-over from 2005 of \$25,000 from the state grant. This is a total of \$55,000 which is \$9000 more that 2005.

Rules & Mutual Aid: This is on hold pending changes to the county charter.

Erie County Chiefs: B Boldt reported the following:

- The next meeting will be March 20 at Bowmansville.
- The annual banquet is March 25
- The FASNY propane training is scheduled for April 22 at the Academy.

Erie County Vol. Firemen's Assoc.: No report

Fire District Officers: The next meeting is March 15 at Bellevue

Fire Police: No report.

Old Business

Amherst Tower: The additional correspondence received on this was discussed. There was another lengthy discussion and several members presented their interpretations of the motion that was acted on at the October 27, 2005 meeting. The discussion centered around the fact that even though there was a motion in the affirmative to allow for the proposal to proceed, there is not a clear consensus among the FAB members with regard to the final resolution and overall plan for the training towers operated by the county. As a result of the discussion, it was decided to have the motion adopted at the October 2005 meeting printed as an attachment to these minutes and also, to send a letter to the Amherst Chiefs (et al) that there is no additional actions planned by the FAB on this matter and that we will stay with the action adopted at the October 2005 meeting.

New Business

Radio Training Class: T Catalano advised that training materials handed out at a recent radio training course contained a lot of outdated information. It was discussed that there is more current information available but the status of it is unclear. When 800 MHz is implemented, there will be a complete training course prepared which will replace the current curriculum.

Municipal Training Officers (MTOs): WG Swecz suggested we consider what is needed to begin funding training for these positions, if and when they ever become needed in the county. This will be looked at by the Budget Committee.

Additional Clerical Staff for Fire Safety: W Boldt suggested we send a letter to the legislature and county executive requesting additional clerical staff for Fire Safety. There was a question as to whether this should come from the Commissioner's office. It was discussed that previous discussions with senior management in the department have produced little results.

A motion was made by R Mariani, seconded by WG Swecz, to send a letter to all legislators, the commissioner and county executive requesting a full-time clerical person for the Fire Safety Division. The motion was duly voted on and carried.

Also discussed was the need for each member to go back to their respective organizations asking for letters to be sent to the same entities for this purpose.

Treasurer's Report

J Wicka reported the following:

Previous net worth \$246.86, tonight's receipts were \$16.00 for a new net worth of \$262.86.

Adjournment

With no further business to conduct, WG Swecz made a motion to adjourn with D Larking offering a second. The motion was duly voted on and carried. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted

John R. Wicka

Secretary/Treasurer

Attachment: Portion of FAB Meeting Minutes; October 27, 2005

- Amherst Training Tower Proposal: W G Szewc advised that the committee met with the Amherst Committee and he asked J Lawida to report out on the meeting. J Lawida distributed the revised proposal (attached) and advised one of the major changes made was that with the proposed user fee. A lengthy discussion followed which included a full review of the revised proposal. After the discussion, D Larkin made a motion, seconded by D Connolly, that the Fire Advisory Board approve the proposal and recommend that negotiations with the county begin to allow the purchase of the facility to the Amherst/Clarence/Newsted Chiefs. The motion came under question.
 - J Wicka recommended that the entire issue of county fire training facilities be looked at and instead of doing a “piece meal” approach, we should look at this as a larger and long-term plan. In doing this, all 3 facilities could be looked at and we should seek comments from all entities in the fire service about this. He stated he is not opposed to the Amherst proposal but felt that more could be accomplished in the long run if we do not take quick action on this issue and address other issues that could play into this decision down the road.
 - C Bethge suggested that D Larkin should not have made the motion to recommend approval of the plan as he represents a major stakeholder and it could be looked at as a conflict of interest. He also stated that the consideration for a long-term and broader approach to these issues should be turned over to the drill tower committee.
 - As a result of C. Bethge’s suggestion on the motion, D Larkin withdrew his motion and it was instead introduced by D Carrier. The second remained the same. D Carrier also stated that we should move forward on this and not oppose the proposal.
 - J Lawida stated the FAB will continue to have recommendations in the process and operating of the Amherst facility. We can use this proposal and this facility to make it better for all firefighters. No one will be prevented from using the tower.
 - T Schmittendorf suggested the proposal be presented to all organizations and the general fire service population so we can learn how everyone feels about this. We should consider accepting written comments.
 - G Whittington advised he would like to see this proposal as a starting point to developing a long-term master plan. Possibly a 5 to 20 year plan. We can also modify the proposed motion to have it read that we approve it for further negotiations.
 - At that point the question was moved and a roll call vote was taken with the following results: D Allen – No; B Atkins – Yes; C Bethge – No; W Boldt – No; J Carr – No; D Carrier – Yes; D Connolly – Yes; T Catalano – No; D Kamann – Yes; D Larkin – Yes; J Lawida – Yes; R Litfin – Yes; R Mueller – Yes; E Saternus – Yes; T Schuekler – Yes; W Szewc – Yes; J Wicka – No; G Whittington – No. The motion was approved with 11 Yes, 7 No.